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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 000252

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [RS](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: GOR SUPPORTS ISAF TRANSIT OF GOODS TO AFGHANISTAN,
SEEKS EXPERTS MEETING

REF: A. STATE 6471

[1](#)B. 08 MOSCOW 3655

[1](#)C. SZPILA-EMB MOSCOW E-MAIL JANUARY 29

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary and Action Request: In response to ref A dipnote, the MFA has indicated that, provided all usual requirements for commercial shipments on Russia's rail network are met, there should be no difficulties with the proposed shipment of non-military goods to ISAF in Afghanistan using the Northern Distribution Network (NDN). However, MFA also urged that transport experts meet on the margins of the February 10-11 Afghanistan meetings in Moscow to discuss details of the shipments to ensure they proceed smoothly. In order to be as transparent as possible and to seek to avoid problems, we request details on the number and arrival date of the containers at the Russian border, as well as the specific route and entry and exit points into and out of Russia. End Summary and action request.

Transit Deal Is Complete, Now Let's Talk About It

[1](#)2. (SBU) We delivered ref A dipnote to MFA Deputy Director of the Department of European Cooperation Yuriy Gorlatch and MFA North America Department on January 26, and followed up with meetings on January 27 and January 28. At the meeting January 27, Gorlatch initially told us that we did not need to send the dipnote because the proposed shipment for non-military goods to ISAF in Afghanistan was being sent via commercial means, and was in accordance with the April 4 letter from the GOR to NATO. According to Gorlatch, NATO could begin shipping supplies to ISAF (not Operation Enduring Freedom) via the NDN immediately.

[1](#)3. (SBU) As we sought to ensure that, provided all commercial requirements were met, there would be no problem from the GOR with the shipment, Gorlatch suggested that expert-level meetings with USG transport agents and Russian customs and railroad officials be held in Moscow prior to sending the first shipment to avoid any "technical difficulties." Gorlatch stressed that the GOR wanted the first shipment to go smoothly, and without incident. He suggested that officials from both sides should get to know each other so that, in case there are any problems with the shipments, they could call each other. Recognizing the difficulty of arranging such a meeting prior to February 4, Gorlatch later invited Pol/DAOoffs to a meeting on January 28 with customs and railroad officials.

Customs, Railroad Requirements

14. (SBU) At an almost-two hour meeting January 28, Gorlatch and Deputy Directors and staff from Russian railroad authority and customs indicated that the initial shipment using the NDN should be okay, provided all the commercial requirements were met. However, at that meeting and subsequently, MFA asked how many containers and how often we expected to ship, and what route would be used for shipments. Per ref C e-mail, we said the original 90-container initial shipment was now likely to be closer to 100 containers, and would likely not reach the Russian border until o/a February 13, and we believed it would be transiting through Latvia.

15. (SBU) The Deputy Director for Russian Railroad gave a very lengthy, detailed, briefing on the procedures for shipping commercial cargo through Russia. She assured us that this was the standard procedure for commercial shipments, with no special requirements for the cargo we proposed to ship except that it should note that the final destination was Afghanistan. Key elements were:

- The procedures conform to the Agreement on International Cargo Information and Shipment, which all of the relevant countries subscribe to. She said all shipping companies and other railroads should know the procedures;
- The shipper needs to indicate intake and outtake points, point of destination (Termez), and physical or legal entities receiving the goods at every point, including Afghanistan, in the consignment bill;
- The consignment bill needs to indicate (para 20) who will pay (better that shipping payments have been made before

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cargo reaches the RF border);

- Cargo we've specified does not need a person accompanying it, but it is up to us if we want someone; and
- It would be best if the containers were loaded on one platform, and it was recommended that one shipper be used from point of origin (e.g. Riga) to termination point (e.g. Termez).

16. (SBU) In response to our question about specific documentation for the shipments, the Customs representative told us these shipments were covered by usual customs rules and there were no special requirements for it. She gave us a copy of the Russian regulations (in Russian) and said all of the requirements and specific documentation were listed in the document (faxed to EUR/RUS). She added that Russian Customs had notified all their relevant offices of the NATO transit agreement. She said Customs would respect the norms of international transit and not inspect the cargo, unless there was suspicion about the contents. Also, no customs fees would be required for such a transit in accordance with international standards. Gorlatch added that Russia wanted to avoid any problems with the shipment, and ensure it was fair and transparent. At the time of the April 4 letter, Russia had requested guarantees that the route would not be used for "gray schemes," e.g. shipping of things like cognac, and NATO had provided those assurances.

17. (SBU) Although both the railroad and customs representatives indicated that there was nothing needed beyond the normal information provided for a commercial transit, Gorlatch repeated that "it would be useful" to have the "facts" about the U.S. transit arrangements with all the other countries, as Russia "was hearing through the media" about such arrangements, but did not know the details. While he did not specifically request copies of the U.S. agreements with other countries, he said it was important for Russia to know the terms of such arrangements, such as whether Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had the same list of excluded goods as Russia.

Follow up February 10-11

18. (SBU) Gorlatch agreed it would be useful for the Transcom/RR/Customs experts meet separately on the margins of the February 10-11 meeting on Afghanistan in Moscow. Gorlatch also suggested a meeting of the experts from all the potential transit countries be held, possibly in Brussels. We suggested these issues be discussed at February 10-11 meeting.

Comment and Action Request

19. (SBU) It appears that, as long as all the commercial requirements are met, the NDN shipments should be treated as would any commercial shipment. That said, the GOR seems a bit nervous about ensuring they go smoothly, with no problems, so the more transparent and open we can be, the better. We request details on the number and arrival date of the containers at the Russian border, as well as the specific route and entry and exit points into and out of Russia.
BEYRLE